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Big Game Openers – Boundaries Tentatively Set

The Montana Fish and Game Commission set tentative opening dates and hunting district descriptions for the 1966 big game season at their meeting in Helena, February 7. Final decisions on opening dates and areas will be made by the Commission at their March meeting after they have had a chance to review comments from sportsmen, stockgrowers, and other cooperators.

Deer and Elk

The Commission has adopted a policy to open the general deer and elk season on the fourth Sunday of each month. This will make the general date October 23 for the coming season. In northwestern Montana (Fish and Game District 1) the only variance from this date is planned for deer and elk in the Upper and Middle Forks of the Flathead River, and for elk in the Mission Mountains. These are tentatively scheduled to open September 15.

In the remainder of western Montana (Fish and Game District 2) a number of deer and elk seasons are tentatively scheduled to open Saturday, September 24. These would include deer and elk in a portion of the North Superior area, and in the South Superior, West Bitterroot, West Fork, East Fork, and Upper Rock Creek. A part of the North Fork of the Blackfoot is scheduled to open for deer and elk on September 15, and deer archery areas in the Bitterroot Bottom and Helmville-Ovando country are scheduled for September 25.

In southwestern Montana (District

3) the Upper Gallatin is planned to open for deer and elk on October 2, while the Absaroka will open September 15. September 24 is the tentative opening date established for the West Big Hole. With the exception of a part of the Pryor Mountains, set for Nov. 6 on elk, and the Bear Paw Mountains, October 30, the remainder of the state to be open to gunners will see deer and elk hunting opening October 23.

A statewide pre-gun archery season on deer has been slated from September 25 to the opening of firearm hunting. A number of special elk archery seasons also beginning September 25 are planned.

Antelope

In keeping with the Commissions' policy to open general antelope hunting the third Sunday in October, most antelope areas will open to gunners on the 16th of October, 1966. Three exceptions are the Lima Peaks-Medicine Lodge, Pioneer-Horse Prairie, and Madison areas which are slated for a September 4 opening. A statewide pre-gun archery season for antelope has also been planned to begin September 25. As in the past, archers will be required to hold the special antelope license and archery stamp.

Moose

Northwestern Montana moose areas are planned to open on September 15 while remaining western Montana areas will see hunting begin September 24. September 23 is slated for opening of moose hunting in most southwestern Montana areas, though the Upper Stillwater, Slough Creek, Buffalo Fork and Hellroaring-Cottonwood areas have a September 15 label. The upper Gallatin is planned to open October

2. Remaining moose areas will open October 23, with the exception of the Clark Fork in South Central Montana which will open September 15.

Sheep

Sheep hunters will find the higher more remote sheep areas opening September 15. These include the Kootenai-Eureka, Gallatin-Absaroka, and Sweetgrass. The Sun River sheep hunting will begin October 23, and the second season in the Blue Mountains of eastern Montana is expected to open September 24.

Goat

Most goat areas will be opening September 15, except in western Montana (District 2) where most opening dates have been tentatively set for September 24.

Parks Along Water To Get Facelifting With Fuel Tax Monies

Recent national studies into recreational activities of the public have confirmed the fact that water attracts people like a magnet. This preference for water-oriented recreation was recently documented for Montana in the Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Fortunately, the 1963 Montana Legislature passed a law dedicating 1 per cent of the state motor fuel tax to development of motorboat recreation in State Parks situated along water. Appropriation of these funds for this use by the 1965 legislative body happily coincided with enactment of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. This Act provides for 50-50 matching funds for acquisition and development of outdoor recreation.

By the use of this combined financing, the Montana Fish and Game Department will rehabilitate all of the water-based parks. Funds from the fuel tax will be used only in areas where motorboating is a prime activity. It is only right that funds derived from this tax be used in areas to enhance the recreational opportunities of the people who pay the tax.

Montana's seventeen water-based parks will get a "facelifting" this summer. For the first time, people in charge of this operation can look forward with confidence to a program for which no apologies will be necessary. If you motorboaters find a bulldozer on the beach this summer, please bear with us. Your interests are being served.

Medicine Rocks State Park

Have you ever visited Medicine Rocks State Park? When you are in Southeastern Montana near Baker or Ekalaka take an extra hour or so and visit the park. You will find your visit worthwhile.

The park contains some of the most strange and striking formations to be found in the state. Spirals, columns, archways and caves have been formed from sandstone formations by centuries of wind and rain erosion. More recently there has occurred what might be called "human erosion", caused by the carving of thousands of names, initials and dates in the soft formations.

Legend has it that Indians once held medicine dances here. The "Rocks" are located in what was once Indian country, and there is little question that it provided an excellent place for Indians to make medicine for whatever purpose they may have had in mind. Theodore Roosevelt wrote of his visit to the Medicine Rocks during the time he had a ranch in the Dakotas.

It was back in 1956 and 1957 that public spirited citizens in Carter County decided that the Medicine Rocks should be set aside as a state park. The land belonged to Carter County and was under the administration of the Carter County Commissioners. When the proposal was presented to the Commissioners they expressed a willingness to transfer the land to the state for administration by the State Parks Division which was then under the Highway



Medicine Rocks — Where Indians Talked With the Great Spirits

Commission. The proposal was then presented to the State Highway Commission and there was immediate acceptance. On April 3, 1957 the deed was officially transferred to the state and the area became officially known as Medicine Rocks State Park.

The area deeded to the state contains 320 acres. The actual scenic exposure contains most of the rocks, although there are a few small areas outside the park that contain some of the rocks. The rocks are a light buff, cross-bedded sandstone that was deposited on the floodplain of a wide, slow-moving river about 70 million years ago. At least that is what the experts say. The rock exposures which are seen in the park are a result of differential erosion, and the fact that each exposure is capped with a thin layer of more resistant sandrock. The result of this erratic erosion has produced the rocks which seemingly jut out of the prairie to heights of 80 feet. Erosion on the rocks has chiseled them into fantastic and weird shapes. Holes, pockets, spirals, archways and tunnels of various types and sizes are found in all of the rocks. Sometimes the pocket will continue to erode until a tunnel through the entire rock has been formed. Such pockets and tunnels make ideal hid-

ing places for rabbits and other small animals that live in the area.

The Medicine Rocks are not "badlands." Badlands are areas of mature erosion in formations that are predominantly clay and very fine, loosely consolidated sand. The Medicine Rocks are a much firmer sandstone, but still highly subject to wind and water erosion.

The park borders Montana Highway 7 and is located some eleven (11) miles north of Ekalaka or twenty-four miles south of Baker. Auto trails through the park have been constructed and are open for traffic as soon as the snow goes off in the spring. Not too much construction work has been done on the interior roads because the sand will blow and drift once the cover has been removed and the underlying soil exposed to the wind. These roads do not get muddy but there will be an occasional sand drift. By the end of May and in June the area flourishes with several kinds of wild flowers. Sharp eyes will pick out an antelope now and then, and small animals and upland game birds will also be seen.

The Park Section has installed picnic tables, fireplaces and latrines throughout the area. These facilities are located at strategic spots close to a formation or possibly under

trees that provide inviting shade on a warm summer afternoon or evening. A well is located near the entrance to the park.

Since these facilities have been placed in the park, there has been considerable use of the area and good public acceptance. Most of the use comes from adjacent areas for evening and Sunday outings. School picnics during the spring of the year are popular. Tourist traffic in the park is not heavy because it is located off the beaten path of the average traveler. Visitors to the area from North and South Dakota are common. License plates from other states will be found in the park and these are usually people with an interest in strange and unusual formations or who have an interest in places of historic note.

Spring Black Bear Season – How To Hunt 'Em

Despite the protests of skiers and other snow bugs, winter will be giving way to spring in the not too distant future. With the first signs of spring, black bears will stir from their winter beds and, gaunt from hibernation, begin their almost ceaseless foraging.

The spring black bear season in Montana will open March 15. The grizzly season will not open until the general deer and elk hunting seasons in the fall. Montana regulations limit hunters to one bear per person per license year. Cub bears and female bears with cubs at their sides are protected during the spring and summer.

There will be two special areas closed to the hunting of black bear. One includes a part of Flathead County lying within the Big Creek Drainage of the North Fork of the Flathead River, and the other will be an area around the West Yellowstone garbage dump.

Where To Hunt 'Em

Nearly all of Montana west of the continental divide and the eastern slopes of the Rockies offer black bear hunting, but the bears are thicker in some areas than they are in others. The Swan Valley, South and Middle Forks of the Flathead, the Whitefish Range, the St. Regis River, Thompson Falls west, and the Libby country are some of the areas most heavily populated with black bears.

When

Past records show that hunters are more successful at taking bears during the spring than during any



other time of year. Hides are usually prime and suitable for trophies from early spring until about the middle of June, and from about mid-August until the bears hibernate.

How

Side hill parks and grassy logging roads below the snowline are good spots to find bears during the spring. Here they are searching out early growing dandelions, clover, and other vegetation. The area that a black bear ranges is usually quite small, often less than one square mile, so individual bears will feed regularly in areas where there is a lot of early growing plant food. Clear-cut logged areas are seldom used. Feeding activity is highest during the morning until around 9:00 a.m. and in the evenings from about 4:00 p.m. until dark. Bears may, however, forage for food any time of day.

Care of the Hide

Care must be taken with hides, especially during warm weather. They should never be left lying in direct sunlight very long. Several pounds of salt should be rubbed into all parts of the fleshy sides of the hide. It can then be rolled, but should be salted again in several days. If it is not necessary to roll the hide, just salt it and leave it spread out. Hides should never be rolled, without a good salting, unless they are to be frozen.

The Meat

Hunters are not required to use bear meat, but black bears are good to eat all through the season. Most

National Wildlife Week – March 20-26

During the past several years the interest and participation in outdoor recreation has swept America like a tide, beginning almost imperceptibly and then growing to a magnitude whereby it is now an important facet in national planning, economics, and well being. Annually, the week in which the first day of spring occurs is set aside as "National Wildlife Week." National Wildlife Week was first proclaimed by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1938. This period has served to focus public attention on the importance of natural resource conservation and to highlight specific conservation issues. The week is sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation and its affiliates.

This year, National Wildlife Week is scheduled for the period of March 20-26. The theme to be highlighted during 1966 will feature the preservation of natural beauty. This trend toward greater appreciation of our outdoors was the focus of prime measures to beautify highways and stirred up hot debate prior to the passage of a beautification bill in Congress last fall. On the state level, Montana's legislature also took steps to see that unsightly roadside areas receive attention.

The new federal and state laws and programs will be of tremendous value in cleaning up or screening distasteful features which mar the scenic beauty along highways. However, there are many other areas where significant efforts can be made to preserve natural beauty and enrich outdoor experiences such as fishing, hunting, camping, boating, picnicking, and hiking. The Fish and Game Commission has taken strides to preserve the aesthetic aspects of some of our more important streams by attempting to maintain them in a free flowing condition and to otherwise preserve their beauty and recreational potentials. The Yellowstone River from the boundary of Yellowstone National Park to Pompey's Pillar near Billings was the first stream to be declared a state waterway by the Fish and Game Commission. The

persons who like bear meat prefer bears killed during the fall. The meat should be treated in the same manner as one would care for the meat of any other animal. Like most game, the quality of meat will vary with animals.

enthusiasm and support of communities and groups along the river, and the vision they have shown in planning have put this Yellowstone waterway program on a firm foundation. Good progress in development and cleaning up eyesores is being made.

The Missouri River from Fort Benton to the head of Fort Peck Reservoir has also received attention and has been declared as a Historic Waterway. There is a tremendous interest, nationwide, to see that this last remaining unspoiled portion of the Missouri is maintained in its present condition.

These two areas, however, are only a small part of Montana's treasure of streams which offer great recreational potential. The Fish and Game Commission has laid the groundwork for including others in the Montana Recreation Waterways System. Emphasis for selection of the streams will be placed on quality fishing and quality recreation. The natural esthetics of the streams and maintenance of their beauty, of course, is a major consideration, and the program therefore lends itself very nicely to the theme of the 1966 National Wildlife Week.

The observance of National Wildlife Week is conducted at the local

level by sportsmen's clubs, conservation organizations, and other groups which are members of state affiliates of the Federation. Members of civic, fraternal, women's groups, and schools, as well as conservation and farm organizations, are invited to take steps to preserve the state's natural beauty and thereby make Montana a better place to live.

Gallatin Elk Season

During late January, there were indications that elk in Yellowstone Park were starting to move out of the Park onto wintering grounds in the Upper Gallatin Canyon Area. It appeared that with elk moving onto wintering areas there would be a good chance of a special elk season there in order to maintain the base herd at 1,000 animals. It was getting on into the year, however, and since it takes time to set up a special drawing and get permits out, the Commission thought it advisable to accept applications for a possible season. This would save valuable time if and when aerial counts showed enough elk on the winter range to warrant a special hunt.

On January 26, first publicity was given to the fact that applications for a possible Gallatin elk season

would be accepted. The deadline for applications to be postmarked was midnight, February 1.

On January 31, after counts showed more than 1,000 elk in the Gallatin area, the Commission declared a special season in part of the Upper Canyon Area. Based upon past experience of hunter participation and hunter success, it was decided that 200 special permits and 400 alternate permits would be issued. The quota of elk to be taken was 200. Over 5,000 applications listing more than 6,500 names were received by the Department from hunters anxious to join the special permit hunt.

The season was set up so the first group of 200 hunters would hunt from February 5 through February 11, the second group from February 9 through 15, and the third group from February 12 through 18.

At the date of this writing, February 14, there have been 43 elk taken during the special Gallatin season.

Weather in the area is moderate for the high country as are snow depths. Though elk have considerable mobility due to the lack of heavy snows, hunters found the use of snow shoes to be of great advantage.

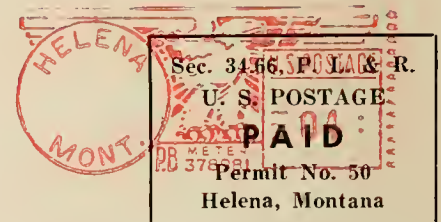
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